

November 15th, 2022

To Chair Susan Manchester, Vice Chair Al Cutrona, Ranking Member Sedrick Denson and Members of the House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee:

My name is Stevie Beck and I am here to speak today in opposition of HB454. This committee has previously heard from my mother, Maria Polaris, in the first spring proponent hearing, and I thought it would be fair if you heard the truth. I am transgender, I was born and raised in Ohio, and I have received gender-affirming medical care related to my transition for 7 years now in Ohio.

Fearing rejection, I did not tell my healthcare providers that I was trans until I was 19, although I came to the realization in my youth three years prior. My parents were never supportive, and they tried to convince me that I should be 25 before I made any major medical decisions involving hormones or surgery. This ranged from articles from biased sources full of fear-mongering and fabricated data, to abuse that caused me to create a boundary with immediate family, which later effectively cut me off from my entire family in every way. I'd love to make a list of all the misinformation that was given to me by my parents and other people to try and convince me that I wasn't trans and shouldn't transition, but I only have five minutes. To be frank, it's all lies. I am 26 now, my quality of life has drastically improved from gender-affirming care, and I do not regret any of my healthcare decisions.

I was never coerced by my school psychologists or healthcare providers to come out as trans or leave my family. I struggled back then with the thought of being transgender because I feared that my family would reject me, and I therefore was afraid of them finding out. I kept it a secret to protect myself. None of my therapists had experience with gender questioning youth, but they listened as I struggled to find any kind of familial support for my mental health. I was lucky to have confidentiality in therapy as a minor, it saved my life.

If this bill were passed while I was under 18, my therapists may have been forced to share aspects about me that I feared my parents finding out about. Without their confidential support, my story may have ended differently. I took lessons from that support into my adult life, where I had to learn how to live on my own without unconditional love, advice, or support to fall back on from a family. Interacting with my family after coming out as trans and subsequently seeking medical care as an adult meant that I would never be respected, I would be bombarded with propaganda with unsubstantiated claims, and I would be eventually diagnosed with PTSD from their behavior towards me. It is sad to be the age I am now, knowing these fears I had as a minor were truly justified.

We do not want a future where transgender, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and intersex youth fear disclosing their concerns to therapists or medical providers who have the ability to help them. In cases where families fully support their children, they should not have to flee the state for better healthcare. Decisions against gender affirming healthcare should not be made without looking at facts or current data, without serious input from licensed medical professionals, or without consideration of families and individuals like me who have NO negative experiences with gender affirming care.